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ABSTRACT

This handbook, one in a series of works dealing with adult literacy education, is designed for use by volunteers who are responsible for recruiting students into literacy programs. Addressed in the first part of the guide are various steps in organizing a recruitment campaign that include getting to know the program staff, learning about the adult learner, composing a general fact sheet on illiteracy and adult literacy, contacting representatives of community organizations and soliciting their support, and developing products and materials to publicize the program. The second half of the guide discusses various types of media that can be used to publicize a literacy program and provides guidelines for working with representatives of the television, newspaper, and radio media to develop an effective publicity campaign. Appended to the guide are a sample fact sheet, sample 30-second audio public service announcements, and examples of articles, posters, and handouts. (MN)

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"If only they can be reached..."

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Strategies for Literacy Program Recruitment

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STRATEGIES FOR LITERACY PROGRAM RECRUITMENT

1983

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Department of Instruction and Support Services

Administrative Staff

Donald W. Ingwerson, Ed.D.	Superintendent
Dawson Orman	Deputy Superintendent for Instruction and Support Services
Bobby Green	Assistant Superintendent for Support Services
Tom Hale	Director of Adult and Continuing Education

Jefferson County Board of Education
Office of Adult Education, Durrett Education Center
4409 Preston Highway
Louisville, Kentucky 40213

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER
OFFERING EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction 1

II. Organize 2

A. Set goals 2

B. Know staff 3

C. Know the adult learner 4

D. Know the local agencies 5

E. Write a fact sheet 6

F. Contact suggestions 7

G. General tips 8

III. Media Coverage 11

A. Television 11

B. Radio 13

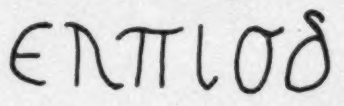
C. Newspapers 14

D. Various Print Media 15

IV. Appendix 16

Grateful appreciation is expressed to Kathy Esposito, volunteer, for her work in preparing this handbook for other volunteers who, like Kathy, have assumed the responsibility for student recruitment.

INTRODUCTION



Imagine the printed page as unintelligible as the six figures at the top of the page. That is how words appear to over 25 million Americans. Maddening? Frustrating? Embarrassing? There are not enough derogatory adjectives to describe the feeling.

We can make the difference. We can give these millions of non-readers a new chance at life. We can help them read to their children. We can help them to relate better in a reading world. We can help them help themselves—if only they can be reached. This is where your job begins. Recruitment and public relations are the backbone of a successful adult reading program. You must make the community aware of our illiteracy problem. You must recruit tutors to teach these non-readers. You must make the non-reading adult aware of the opportunities to learn to read.

You can make the difference—all the difference in the world. You can translate the Greek symbols into what they mean—H O P E.

Recruitment is a difficult but rewarding task. The first call is always the most difficult; after a while it comes easy. You may spend many fruitless hours on the phone before you make the first positive contact. Keep your enthusiasm up. It rubs off. If you really believe in your cause, your zeal will catch on. You are working for a very worthwhile cause. Remember that.

Try different approaches in your public relations work. Many times one type of campaign does not produce the desired results. There is usually no reason why one type of campaign is successful one year but not the next. Just keep plugging; the rewards are well worth it.

ORGANIZE

Organization is the crucial part of a successful campaign. The most brillant letter is worthless if you cannot find it. Be sure to keep copies of all letters sent. File the reply along with the copied letter; that way the only letters left in the "current file" are not acknowledged. As soon as your letter is answered send either a reply or a thank you note. Be sure to keep a calandar of upcoming events and appointments. The time spent on organization pays off three–fold.

Before jumping into your campaign, sit down with your staff and set goals: write an agenda, with a beginning and ending date in mind; select a target group (tutors, adult–readers, or sponsors); decide which type of media coverage you wish to pursue; decide which print media will best meet your needs—posters, flyers, or bookmarks.

Familiarize yourself with all of the local agencies that may have adult learning programs. You may need to work with them or you may get inquiries regarding their programs. Some agencies might be: Laubach, Literacy Volunteers, non–organized individual groups, churches, or the local Board of Education. Make sure that these agencies know of your program. Your goal should be to teach the adult illiterate to read, not to compete with other groups.

ORGANIZE

GET TO KNOW YOUR STAFF

Get to know your staff. If you are working with staff from another department, become acquainted with them. People are a lot more receptive when called by name. Be courteous and friendly.

Get to know their interests, specialities, and time schedules. One secretary may be a closet artist and could help you with a layout. If you know that the first week of the month is very hectic, do not ask to have 5,000 postcards typed. Work within their schedules.

If you are a volunteer, remember that paid staffers must fit your needs into their regular jobs. Be aware of this fact. There is nothing more irritating than an enthusiastic volunteer bounding into a busy office shouting orders!!

3

ORGANIZE

THE ADULT LEARNER

Read all that you can about the adult learner. If you have not been a tutor, attend some adult literacy classes. You must understand your target group.

Most adult illiterates are embarrassed that they cannot read; it is usually a closely guarded secret. Most have bad memories of their school experience. Many are unemployed. Most do not feel good about themselves. For most adults illiteracy is the result of the lack of opportunity. Most have the ability, if given the chance.

Specify in your recruitment that the classes are in an all–adult environment tailored for adults. There will be no "Dick and Jane"–type reading. The textbooks are written specifically for the adult learner. The personal goals of the individual student form the curriculum.

It is devastating to come to a class and admit to an educated stranger that you cannot read. Tailor your recruitment ideas with this in mind. The more secure and less threatened the student feels, the less likely he/she is to leave the program once the first step is taken.

ORGANIZE

Recruitment efforts directed toward the typical functionally illiterate adult may miss important segments of the target pupulations—Hispanics, blacks, migrant farmworkers, the hard–core poor. Providing equal opportunity for and access to literacy for all ethnic and socio–economic groups may require additional special recruitment. The key to reaching special populations is the establishment of a positive relationship with a small group of leaders within each special population—ministers, church workers, community politicians, and editors of community newspapers, for example. These persons may be involved in the program in several ways, such as serving on the advisory committee, evaluating the volunteer tutor orientation and training, and critiquing the promotional materials. Do not hesitate to involve many different types of people in your recruitment efforts.

ORGANIZE

FACT SHEET

Type a general fact sheet (see Appendix 1). This sheet is excellent to send along with press releases, to include in lettes, or to leave after a call is made. So much information is imparted in a conversation that specific facts are difficult to remember. A fact sheet emphasizes on paper the important facts that you want remembered.

Begin your fact sheet with general information about the national illiteracy problem. Follow this with specific information about the local area's problem. Most people do not realize the scope of illiteracy in the United States, much less the vast numbers of non-readers in their local area. Follow this information with facts about your specific program. Be sure to include a phone number and contact person. Be general enough about your needs that the fact sheet can be used for prospective students, tutors, or sponsors.

ORGANIZE

CONTACT SUGGESTIONS

- T.V. Stations—
  - The local national affiliate stations
  - The local cable public access stations
- Radio Stations
- Newspapers
  - The major daily newspapers
  - The local weekly papers
- Businesses
  - Posters in plants
  - Flyers in paycheck envelopes
  - Articles in newsletters
- Direct Mail–outs
- Civic Clubs
- Community Service Agencies
  - Red Cross
  - Salvation Army
  - Disabled American Veterans
- Hospitals
- Health Care Agencies
- Health Department
- School Counselors
- Dept. of Correction and Parole
- Restaurants
- Veterans Administration
- Libraries
- Employment Agencies

PRODUCT SUGGESTIONS

- Posters
- Bookmarks
- Balloons
- Bumper Stickers
- Flyers
- Restaurant Table Tents
- Place Mats
- Badges or Pins
- Bulletin Inserts

ORGANIZE

QUICK TIPS

Some quick specific tips may be helpful in setting up your program.

- Type everything, but personalize with an added memo to those you know. Check over your typing; never send anything that is not perfectly typed.
- Be specific and succinct. Say exactly what you want; say it simply and conclude it.
- When contacting someone by phone, always give your full name and title. If you do not have a specific title, create one.
- Always ask for the person in charge by name, first and last. It may take several calls to find out the person's full name, but it is well worth the effort.
- Always speak to the person in charge; secretaries can easily put you off. You will find that the person in charge is much easier to persuade.
- Have a "cheat sheet" for phone conversations. Write down exactly what you want to say and practice before the call. Underline the important words on your sheet when you make your call—NEVER read from your "cheat sheet."
- Allow a period of rest after the product is finished. Come back and re-read your letter or release and make the necessary corrections.

ORGANIZE

- Always send follow-up thank you notes. One radio announcer talked more about our program after the thank you note than before!

- Keep a file of all correspondences and responses. You can refer to these later, during follow-up.

- Keep a calendar of events. The key to a successful campaign is organization.

- Don't hesitate to sell your program. You are a very worthy cause.

- Look professional--a sloppy appearance will overshadow the most intelligent presentation.

- Keep a scrapbook. It is extremely helpful to look back and get ideas from past years.

ORGANIZE

CHOOSE TYPE CAREFULLY

Carefully choose which of the media will best suit your campaign. Keep in mind your budget, or lack. Television advertising seems to get the most results, but it is very expensive. Radio advertising is much more selective in audience appeal. Newspapers seem to work best when recruiting tutors or sponsors. Various "hand out" types of advertising can be used in extremely specific areas. You may decide to use several or all of the areas for your campaign.

TOPIC OF THE DAY

During your campaign try to be the "topic of the week." If you saturate the various media, you will reach all of the population in one way or the other. If people see literacy news three or four times in one week or month, they begin to see that this is the "in" topic and want to get involved. This is particularly important in the recruitment of volunteer tutors or sponsors.

MEDIA

T.V.

Television coverage is very broad–based. It appeals to all levels of society. It particularly reaches the illiterate adult because there is little reading needed to enjoy a show. However, T.V. is very expensive advertising. Rather than paying for advertising, it is best to use Public Service Announcements or recruit a sympathetic reporter.

Watch your local news shows; early morning, mid–day, evening, and night. Make a list of each newscaster, station, name of the program, and the newscasters' speciality. Some reporters cover only the education or local interest news. Be sure to note this. Local talk shows are also a good source for informational interviews. These shows are continually in need of material.

Know the names of the general manager, the station manager, and the program director. It is not difficult to talk to these people in person; they are very accessible. Call the station and ask for them by name. "Hello, this is Kathy Esposito from the Literacy Action Committee, may I speak with Howard Smith?" Always identify yourself, and ask for the person by name—first and last. If the person is not in, leave your name and number but follow up the next day with a call. These people are very busy and will seldom return a call. If the manager sees your name enough times on a memo, you will be remembered.

MEDIA

When you are informed about a nationally syndicated show dealing with illiteracy, call the local affiliate station. You might suggest an interview with a tutor/student that day on the local news show or you may suggest that your number be shown during the telecast.

All television stations must spend a certain percentage on public service advertising (PSA's). These are free. The station decides, at its own discretion, to air these ads. Get acquainted with the program director: it is the program director's job to schedule the PSA's. Announcements for television are meant for the ears and the eyes. Keep this in mind when writing the PSA. Be concise: who, when, what, where, and why. Put yourself in the viewer's place to convey your message. Always have the phone number on the screen. It takes approximately 10 seconds to read 25 words. If you are given a 60 second spot, write a 150 word copy. (See sample PSA's in the appendix.)

RADIO

Radio advertising can be used effectively for a specific target population. It is a more selective market than television. If you are appealing to a specific race, culture, or nationality, advertise on a corresponding station. The target population of a radio station is easily defined. If you are not certain of the target area of a particular station, call them and ask. They will gladly give you the information.

Radio stations also must spend a certain percentage of time on PSA's. Radio PSA's are meant for the ears only. Be concise. Do not try to impart too much information. The word/time ratio applies for radio PSA's—10 seconds to 25 words. Be sure to include your phone number several times during the broadcast. (See sample PSA's in the appendix).

Become acquainted with popular disc jockeys. They are spontaneous and ad lib very well. When asking for a PSA, send sample ones but encourage spontaneity. If disc jockeys become involved with your cause, they will take every opportunity to plug your program.

Do not forget to send the thank you notes. Everyone appreciates a pat on the back.

MEDIA

NEWS PAPERS

Newspapers are an excellent source of free advertising. An article about your program is as good as a full page of advertising. Newspapers are limited as to audience. The average newspaper is written on an 8th grade reading level. This automatically eliminates the illiterate adult. It can, though, call attention to your program, recruit tutors, elicit community support, and indirectly inform the adult learner.

List the names and phone numbers of the T.V. critic, feature editor, local interest editor, magazine editor, publisher, managing editor, and the public service editor for each local paper. Reporters are always in need of ideas for articles. List all of the local dailies/weeklies, neighborhood papers, church related papers (the Catholic Church usually has a weekly Diocesan paper), and any local union papers. If you hold classes in a Catholic Church, the Diocesan paper will be interested. Many union papers would gladly cover a story about a local union member. When contacting these speciality papers, have a specific story in mind: "Local union member spends his evenings tutoring illiterate adults."

When you locate a reporter interested in your cause, be sure to continue to send ideas for more stories. Besides providing story ideas, you are promoting your cause.

MEDIA

VARIOUS SOURCES

Posters are a fine source for advertising. They can be placed in specific locations. If you are recruiting students, place your posters in fast food resturants, drug stores, groceries, and bus stops—any place an illiterate adult might frequent. Remember that these people have families and the same basic needs as any of us. Your posters should be colorful, have few words, and large print. Remember who you are trying to communicate with. Even if the illiterate misses the posters, a friend may see one and inform the non-reader.

Many churches, stores, and businesses have outdoor marquees which are reserved for messages of community interest. Visit the manager and personally request that your message be used. Keep the message brief since there is limited space. Always include your phone number.

Aim print media (posters, flyers, bookmarks) at volunteer tutors or acquaintances of the non-reader—persons who can read. They may be distributed in public places (shopping centers, health centers, laundromats, banks). Be sure to answer the basic questions: who, what, when, where, and why, and give your phone number. Conjure up a potentially real situation such as, "How would you call the police if you could not read?" Readers cannot imagine not being able to read. You must help them to understand the illiterate's frustrations.

APPENDIX 1

Sample Fact Sheet

Over 62,000,000 adults in the United States are marginally literate. This lack of literacy is a barrier to more than just reading. The feeling of failure, frustration, and shame is an even more appalling side of illiteracy. Illiterates cannot read a menu, fill out a job application, read street signs, or even read a story to their children. The lack of reading ability also makes employability difficult.

If the past two years are an accurate indication, eight hundred students will learn to read for the first time this year. These students range in age from 16 to 82 and have such responsibilities as full time jobs and dependent children.

The Jefferson County Adult Reading Classes resulted from a grant by the Kentucky State Department of Education and has been honored both by the Kentucky Department of Education and the U.S. Office of Education as an exemplary program in education. The program is now a national model being implemented in other states.

Now in its fifth year of demonstration, the model program operates to meet the needs of the estimated 30,000 adults in the community who lack literacy skills. The program attracts a student body with 60% of its members under the age of 30 and an average reading level of 1.9. The average student attended 80 hours of instruction and showed academic gains on standardized tests of 1.2 years. Some students gained as much as 6 years in less than 100 hours of instruction.

These gains do not reflect the pride of accomplishment for these people. Studies have proven that 80% of their children improved in school also. Once the learning begins it seems to snowball.

The Jefferson County Adult Reading Program places an added emphasis on employability skills. Employment was often the major reason for the students' return to school. The desire to learn to read in order to help their own children in school closely followed as the second goal.

Students are treated with the care and respect due to them. The national retention rate for these students is about 50%. The Jefferson County Adult Reading Program retains over 76% of its students. The high retention rate is a direct result of the indepth training of the tutors. These teachers are trained not only in the mechanics of teaching but the psychology of dealing with these people. Most of the tutors are dedicated volunteers.

A complete list of times and locations is available through the Adult Education Office. A student must be 16 years of age or older and not enrolled in the reguiar school program to qualify. All of the reading classes are free. For additional class information call 456–3400.

APPENDIX 2

Sample Audio Public Service Announcement—30 second

One out of every five adults you meet cannot read well enough to cope with daily work and living.

The Jefferson County Adult Reading Program is working to make a difference in the lives of these adults who are handicapped by a lack of reading. You are needed. You can help.

Become involved by volunteering your time to teach an adult to read. Training is provided for all volunteers and training workshop hours are flexible.

Help an adult learn to read today. Volunteer by calling 456–3400. Make a difference in someone's life. Call 456–3400.

APPENDIX 3

Sample Audio Public Service Announcement—30 second

When was the last time you went for a job interview and couldn't read the application? How long has it been since your child asked you to read a story or help with homework and you turned him away because you couldn't read?

Don't feel that you have to go through life meeting one frustration after another because you can't read.

You can learn to read in free classes offered only to adults. Call today at 456–3400 to register. There is no charge for this service.

Call 456–3400 today to find the location nearest you. Don't put off learning to read. It will change your life. Call 456–3400 today.

A message from this station and the Jefferson County Adult Reading Program.

APPENDIX 4

Sample Article

If you can read this, this article is not for you.

There are an estimated 35,000 adults in Jefferson County who cannot read labels on grocery cans, directions on medicine bottles, or restaurant menus. There are an even greater number who have serious reading problems which make it difficult to complete daily activities.

Starting September 17th, free classes will be offered in the Jefferson County area to instruct adults with reading problems. These classes will be offered at varying time schedules in over 30 locations including community centers, churches, schools, and libraries. The program will enroll no more than 10 students in any one class.

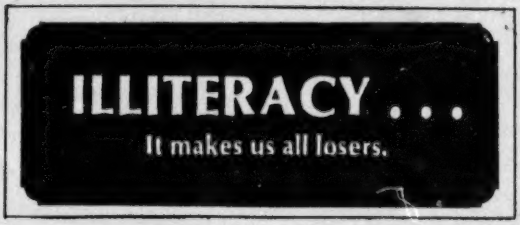
During the 1982–83 school year, over 700 students were enrolled in the program, and it is hoped that 500 can be reached in the coming year.

Registration is being taken on a first–come basis, and a student can enroll now by calling 456–3400.

An individual has 20 to 30 seconds to respond to an interstate sign. Which way do you go...
if you can't read??

APPENDIX 5
Sample Poster

APPENDIX 6



Sample Handout

Four hundred thousand (400,000) Kentucky adults are functionally illiterate. Hundreds of them are unable to fill out a job application. We all lose. We pay for illiteracy in many ways, such as programs that treat the symptoms but seldom affect the cause and in:

- **LOST DOLLARS**
  An illiterate adult earns 42% less than a high school graduate.
- **LOST PRODUCTIVITY**
  As unemployment edges toward an all–time high, American industry is unable to find a sufficient number of employees with basic literacy skills to fill empty positions.
- **LOST HUMAN RIGHTS**
  Twenty percent (20%) of Kentucky's adults are unable to make informed decisions, because they cannot read.
- **LOST SAFETY**
  Crime—Most crimes are committed because of economic need.

  National Security—National defense depends on sophisticated weaponry, but 27% of Army enlistees cannot read training manuals written at the 7th grade level.

  Accidents—Illiterate parents are unable to read life–saving instructions or to use the phone book when they need help. Industrial accidents result when workers cannot read safety instructions.

IMPORTANT

SIGNS

If you know someone who can't read...

If you want to help someone learn to read...

LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA